

## **THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET**

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Conference Room No.3, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 27 October 2005 at 4.00pm.

### PRESENT:

Mr D Fisher (independent Member and Chairman), Reverend E Davidson (Independent Member), Mr M Dulieu (Parish Councillor), Councillor W Laverick and Councillor C Carr.

Officers: C Potter (Monitoring Officer) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

### **38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Miss V McEwan, Mr M Graham and Councillor J J Evans.

### **39 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 22 SEPTEMBER 2005**

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held 22 September 2005, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record."

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

### **40 MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Carr raised the matter of the training budget and advised that a training budget of £154,000 was to be set for the council as a whole and of that, £150,000 had already been allocated.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he had submitted a growth bid of £5,000 in the need of securing adequate funds for the Committee to fulfil its role.

Mr Dulieu expressed his concerns regarding articles for the District News and the Committee not having any control over the final edited version of the submitted article.

Councillor Laverick stated that he felt it was important that as the Committee was an independent body, that the views of the Committee should be treated as such and any articles produced should be able to reflect these views without interference from the Council or its employees.

Reverend Davidson commented that it should not be the editor's responsibility to change the style in which an article is written but to ensure that the article fits the allocated space and that it reads correctly.

The Chairman suggested that he and the Monitoring Officer prepare a draft article for the next meeting of the Committee and that, after the Committee have discussed the content of the article, they then arrange a meeting with the Communication/Public Relations Officer to agree the final content.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Chairman and Monitoring Officer prepare a draft article for the District News for the next meeting of the Committee."

#### **41 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

#### **42 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND ASSOCIATED FUNDING**

The Monitoring Officer advised that he had submitted a growth bid for a sum of £5,000 for training for the Standards Committee but that this had not yet been agreed and that this matter should become a standard item on the agenda in order for it to be monitored.

Councillor Carr advised that it was his understanding that the cost of delegates attending the Annual Assembly was funded from the training budget for the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer advised that this was the case and that it included the fees, travelling expenses and accommodation costs of the delegates attending. He also advised that the number of delegates to attend was agreed by Human Resources and it was likely that this was to be reviewed in the future.

He stated that the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees was a useful learning tool and that at a number of Parish Council meetings references had been made to the training and to the Standards Committee, proving the raised awareness and the need to roll out the training programme as soon as possible.

Councillor Carr suggested that the Standards Committee had a training budget for itself and a separate one be created for the like of training other bodies such as Parish Councils, Residents Associations, Tenants Panels etc.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted that fact that the cost of carrying out local investigations lay with the Council and would be funded out of the Standards Committee budget.

He also advised that it was crucial to keep a level of support for Councillors and that the Code of conduct is kept very much in peoples' minds.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and that training requirements and funding be a standard item on the Committee's agenda."

**43 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

The Monitoring Officer advised that notes relating to the sessions held at the Annual Assembly were now available on the Standards Board for England website.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

**44 SAMPLE SURVEY OF INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES AT THE THIRD ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

The Chairman referred to the term of office for Independent Members and advised that the Council would need to make a decision regarding the re-election of these Members and suggested that a report recommending a mechanism for the replacement of Independent Members be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee.

Reverend Elliott advised that the Standards Board recommend a term of four years with one re-election, which equates to eight years service and suggested that the Council adopt this recommendation and that the Independent Members agree amongst themselves a staggered exit.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Monitoring Officer prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee recommending a mechanism for the replacement of Independent Members of the Committee and that the Independent Members meet prior to the next meeting to consider this report."

**45 OUTCOME OF STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND CASE No. SBE6411.04**

The Monitoring Officer advised that the full outcome of the investigation was now available on the Standards Boards for England's website and that the investigation illustrated that a lot of time and effort can go into such investigations.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

**46 ANNUAL REVIEW 2004-2005**

The Monitoring Officer distributed copies of the Standards Board for England publication "Annual Review 2004-2005".

Discussion ensued with regard to funding, training and attendance at meetings.

It was suggested that the Director of Resources be invited to attend a meeting to discuss budgets.

The Chairman agreed that the Director of Resources should be invited to attend a meeting to give an indication of the financial plans for the Committee for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED: "That the Director of Resources be invited to a meeting of the Committee to discuss the financial plans for the Committee for the forthcoming year".

**47 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 8 December 2005 at 4.00pm"

The meeting terminated at 5.15pm.